

NATIONAL BEREAVEMENTS.

A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN THE

North Presbyterian Church,

OF CHICAGO,

ON THANKSGIVING DAY, NOV. 25, 1852,

BY THE

REV. R. H. RICHARDSON, PASTOR.

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PUBLISHED BY S. C. GRIGGS & CO.

“DEMOCRATIC PRESS” PRINT, CLARK STREET.

1852.

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CHICAGO, NOVEMBER 26, 1852.

REV. R. H. RICHARDSON,

Pastor of the North Presbyterian Church.

Dear Sir:—The undersigned believe that the publication of the sermon delivered by you on the occasion of our recent annual Thanksgiving, in which you allude so appropriately to our Nation's bereavement, in the loss of her Webster and her Clay, would be highly satisfactory to those who had the pleasure of hearing it, as well as to our citizens and the public generally.

We therefore cordially unite in requesting a copy for that purpose.

S. C. GRIGGS.
R. L. WILSON,
ROBERT H. MORRIS,
THOMAS HOGE,
WILLIAM DUANE WILSON,
H. E. SEELYE,
JOHN A. BROSS,

J. B. McCORMICK,
JOHN BOND,
B. S. MORRIS,
H. N. HEALD,
ROBERT HERVEY,
E. L. JANSEN,
T. W. WADSWORTH.

CHICAGO, NOVEMBER 27, 1852.

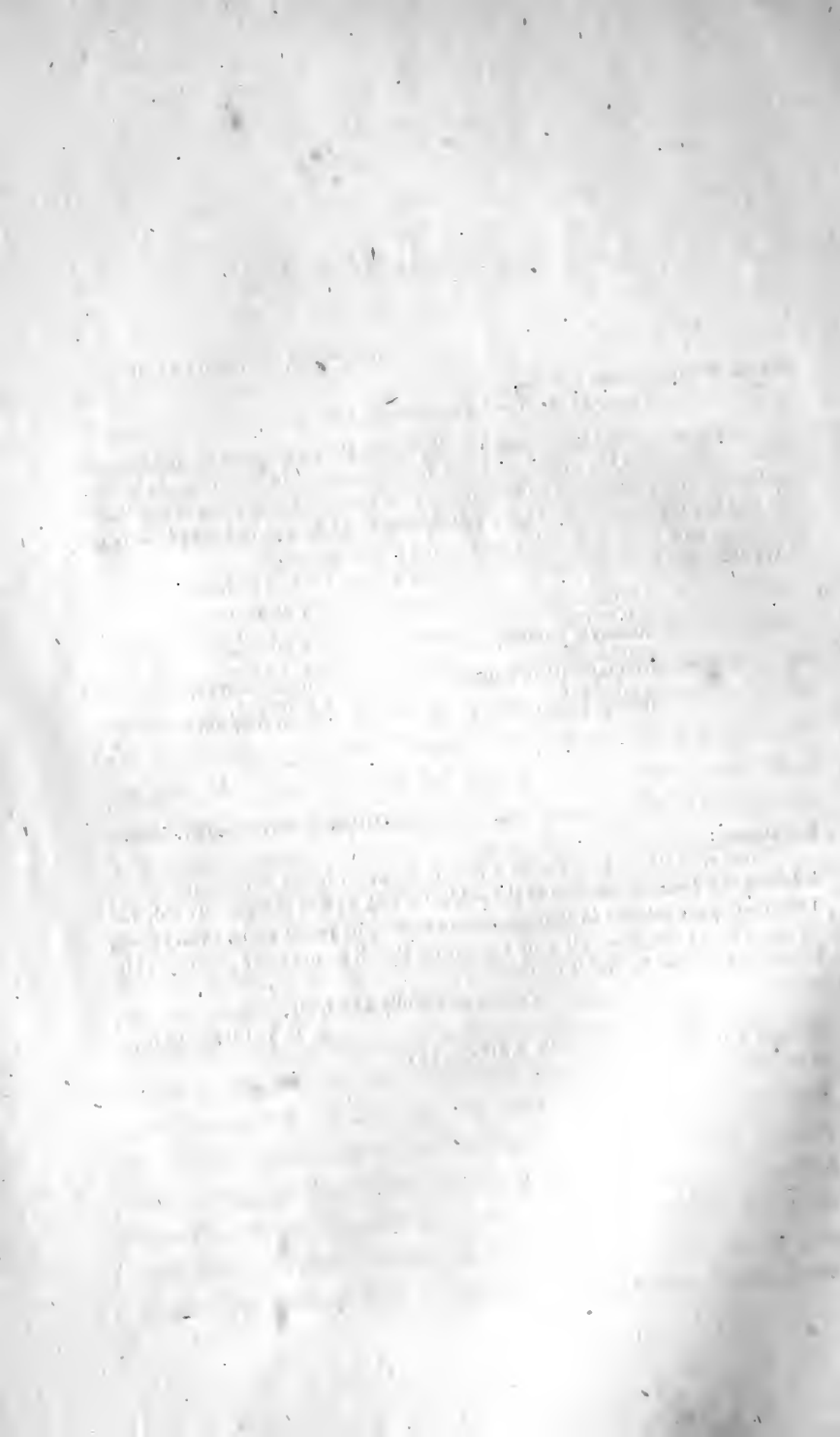
GENTLEMEN:

One who attempts to render a tribute, however feeble, to departed worth, is secure of a hearing, because of the subject which he has chosen. To this fact I attribute your interest in the discourse to which you refer; and for this reason, I submit it to your disposal; only regretting that it is not more worthy of its theme, and of your favorable opinion.

Yours respectfully and truly,

R. H. RICHARDSON.

To Messrs. S. C. Griggs, J. B. McCormick, J. A. Bross, &c. &c.



DISCOURSE.

For behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah, the stay and the staff; the whole stay of bread and the whole stay of water; the mighty man, and the man of war; the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent and the ancient; the captain of fifty, and the honorable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.

ISAIAH III: 1-3.

The text contains the prophecy of Judah's affliction. It contains, in part, the history of our own affliction, since we last met to pay our annual thank-offering to our God. The Lord hath taken away from us, not the stay and staff of bodily support: for the harvest has been plenteous, and the laborers not few. But He has removed the stay and staff of the body politic. He has taken the mighty, the judge, and the prudent, and the ancient, and the honorable man, and the counsellor, and the eloquent orator. If to remember the blessings we have enjoyed, is the object of this day's appointment, and of this assembling of ourselves together; then I can think of no more fitting occupation for the hour, than the remembrance of those honorable men, to whose lives and labors, more than to those of any other who have lately lived or died, we are indebted for our national peace and prosperity. It might seem that lamentations and tears were more becoming to us and to the day, than praise and thanks-giving; while the impressions of our loss are so fresh, and the blood is still flowing from a nation's wounded heart. But, that they have lived is the matter of our rejoicing; and that they still live, in

the impress they have left upon the mind, and heart, and destiny, of a mighty people. They are dead indeed, but only dead as great men can only die. The hand has forgotten its cunning; the eagle-eye has lost its lustre; the bounding heart has ceased to beat; the voice whose tones once charmed the ears of listening senates, and a listening nation, is hushed; the majestic form which once moved to and fro amid an admiring people, will be seen no more. But the places which once knew them shall know them forever. The last words of him who was the last to leave us, will be as true in years to come, as when spoken amid the dissolving of his earthly tabernacle, one month ago. He was but uttering the perpetual prophecy of his own Immortality, when, from the very borders of the world of the dead, he whispered back, "I still live." And we are at once reminded of his own language spoken years before, when he pronounced the eulogy of two other great men who had gone down hand in hand to the grave. "Adams and Jefferson, I have said, are no more. As human beings, indeed, they are no more. They are no more, as in 1776, bold and fearless advocates of independence; no more, as at subsequent periods, the head of the government; no more, as we have recently seen them, aged and venerable objects of admiration and regard. They are dead. But how little is there of the great and good, which can die! To their country they yet live, and live forever. They live in all that perpetuates the remembrance of men on earth; in the recorded proofs of their own great actions; in the offspring of their intellects; in the deep engraved lines of public gratitude, and in the respect and homage of mankind. They live in their example, and they live, emphatically, and will live, in the influence which their lives and efforts, their principles and opinions, now exercise, and will continue to exercise, on the affairs of men, not only in their own country, but throughout the civilized world."

Great men are great blessings, rare as they are great. To a

nation, they are more important than all the other good gifts, which the God of nations can bestow. Talk we of our native equality as we may; if our boast were true, it would be the heaviest curse we could pronounce upon ourselves. We must have mountain-men; men who tower above the plain of ordinary humanity; around whose heads the clouds may gather, and the lightnings flash, and the thunders roll; unharmed themselves, while yet, they draw away the bolts, which would otherwise deal death and devastation to all beneath them. We must have men to lead, to guide, to control; to sway the masses by the might of their opinions and their eloquence, and to shield them by the skill and strength of their arms. We must have men to whom to look, in the hour of perplexity and alarm; men to watch the coming Danger from afar, to warn of its coming, and to avert it, or show the methods of meeting it, undismayed. We must have men to rule us; not merely by the sceptre, or by the staff of office which we ourselves confer upon them; but by the power which God has not given to all; the power of a large heart, and of a great mind, and of a potent tongue. We could not, if we would, and we would not if we could, be all alike great, or all alike small. If the world were all mountain, the people could not live; if the world were all plain, the people would die.

A nation's greatness, therefore, is determined, not by its equalities, but by its inequalities; and its prosperity is measured by the greatness of the men who rule its destinies and order its affairs. And among the men of this nation, to whom this place has been assigned by God, there have been none greater than HENRY CLAY and DANIEL WEBSTER.

Have they not a place among the three most honorable and mighty? I speak not of them as partizans, but as patriots; as men whose services were no more limited by their political relationships, than their fame is "hemmed in by state lines." Carolina — Kentucky — Massachusetts: these were but the homes

from which they came forth to bless a nation. Federalist — Democrat — Whig; these are but family names, but they are kindred and confederate all. And the eye so blinded by the mists of party prejudice, as not to see the greatness of any and of all these men, deserves not to look again upon the sun in his glory.

It is our privilege and duty, then, to remember this day, with hearts of gratitude and voices of thanksgiving, the lives and services of those great men, whom the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. And we would plant the laurel and the willow, side by side, above their newly-made graves; the one, the emblem of a nation's tears; the other, of a nation's honor and undying remembrance.

But there is another reason why we should cherish, with peculiar love and veneration, the memories of these two men.— There have been times when they would have been but two among many, and their death would not have entailed so great a loss upon the people. But alas! they were among the few survivors of a generation which is fast passing away, and like which, another generation cometh not. America has had her share of notable men; men who would have made their mark in any age and any country. Washington and Hamilton and Hancock; Adams and Jefferson; Madison and Marshall, and Calhoun, and Clay, and Webster. There remain yet but two or three, whose names are worthy to be written, even after these. Have we proven ourselves unworthy that the race should be continued? Are we beginning thus to feel the effects of the oft-repeated truth, that Republics are ungrateful? Is it because we have refused them the places to which they were entitled, and have chosen our Chief Rulers from among the inferior and unknown, or those known only as men mighty in war?

We may not be able, perhaps, to trace the causes, but the fact is patent to the eye of all. The visitor to the Capitol, as he enters that chamber where once sate, in solemn and dignified coun-

cil, the "grave and reverend seigniors," of the nation; sees, at a glance, that the times are changed. If it be the first time that he has stood in that honorable and once august Presence, he comes out thence, himself a changed man. The awe and veneration of his youth are ended. The halo with which his imagination had invested these Elders of his people, has faded into the light of common day. And he turns away both a sadder and a wiser man, to muse and mourn over departed greatness; while voices all around him seem echoing the question of his spirit, The Fathers! where are they? — where are they? If, then, blessings brighten as they take their flight; we must look with peculiar emotion upon this disappearing train of statesmen, and mourn with a peculiar sorrow, as, one by one, they are lost to sight, and rejoice with a peculiar joy, in the remembrance of their lives and labors. And in view of the departure of such men, and the contrast which they present with those who take their places, may I not add to my text, as appropriate to the occasion, the verse which immediately follows those which I have read; "And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them."

But let us not despond. Perhaps when great emergencies shall come again, and men's hearts shall be failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, then there may be found those equal to the times, and the Republic may renew her glory, in the glory of her new great names. Circumstances, if they do not make the men, oftentimes do make them mightier than they seemed, and bring them out, in bold relief, against the horizon of their former mediocrity.

But our concern to-day is with the Past, not with the Future; with the Dead, and not with the Living.

In the year which followed the Declaration of Independence, amid the slashes of Hanover, an humble minister of the King of Kings was father to a son of nobler name than any of that royal house after which his birth-place was called. In the year which

preceded the acknowledgment of that Independence by the mother country, amid the granite hills of New Hampshire, an humble captain of the Revolutionary army received into his arms a boy, whose giant soul was worthy of its cradle among those giant hills. Those were eventful years, from 1777 to 1782; but in nothing more influential upon the future of an infant nation, than in giving birth to these two infant boys. But Nations live, while Men die. And now, when six and seventy years have scarcely sufficed to bring the country to its manhood, the men who watched its growth, and moulded its character, and shaped its destinies, have passed through *all* the stages of their earthly history; have been gathered to their Fathers, and have seen corruption.

I have no thought of tracing the career of either, through his many years of public service. What has been said of one is true of both, that "whoever in after times shall write the history of the United States for the last forty years, will write the lives of these two men; and whoever writes their lives, as they ought to be written, will write the history of the Union, from the time they took a leading part in its concerns." By that power of attraction which draws great bodies together, they met, in time, at a central point; the one coming from the mighty forests of "the dark and bloody ground;" the other from the rock-bound coasts of his native New England; each from a State which he had adopted, and which had adopted him, and of which he was the ruling spirit while he lived. And there, in the capital of their common country, with occasional and brief interruptions, they were laborers together in their country's cause.

With two or three exceptions, they were agreed upon the great questions of public policy, which have come before the congress and the nation; and they mingled their eloquent voices in the advocacy of the same principles. But they were men, who, whether they fought with their party, or against it, or irrespective of all party lines; contended always for what they deemed,

not the welfare of one party, class or section, but of all. They were of the same profession, and have held the same offices under State and National Government, and, in every place which they occupied, have left indelible traces of their presence and their agency for good. In the halls of State legislation; in the National House of Representatives; in the Senate Chamber; as Secretaries of State; as expounders and defenders of the Law and Constitution; at the bar of the Supreme and subordinate Courts; as treaty makers with foreign powers; they put forth their noblest energies for the honor and prosperity of the people.

In the flush of their early manhood, and of their dawning fame, when a second war with England was found needful to rivet and secure the results of the first; though they differed in some respects as to its original propriety, and some of the principles on which it was conducted, yet they fought and toiled together for its prosecution, until the nation's rights were acknowledged.

When a State, presuming upon an extreme theory of her own sovereignty, ventured to lift her hands against the laws and officers of the general Government, they united in their efforts to bring her to a state of submission or acquiescence, peaceably, if they could; forcibly, if they must.

If, in the forensic contest which this question excited, the noblest champions of state rights found their ramparts demolished, by the thunder of such words as had seldom before been heard, within the walls of any Capitol; it may be attributed, in part to the weakness of the position which they had taken.

With respect to the currency and the general commercial policy of the country, they were found for the last four and twenty years of their life, not only with each other, but where the mighty South Carolinian at first stood, and other eminent men of the party with which he acted.

When, but recently, the fanaticism, which is found as well in

Carolina as in Massachusetts; as well in New York as in Mississippi; would have rent asunder the bonds of our confederacy, again we find them side by side in valorous efforts to avert the impending danger, and preserve intact the laws and constitution of the country. If in this position there appeared some inconsistency on the part of one, with positions taken in other years. I dare not attribute it, to any motives of selfish interest or ambition, without far better proof than ever has been given. A change of opinion is no evidence of a loss of principle; and it was the testimony of Calhoun himself, near the close of his life; a man whose profoundness of judgment, and, sense of honor and integrity in private and in public, are unimpeachable; that "there was not one whose political course had been more strongly marked by a strict regard to truth and honor than Mr. Webster's."

When Boston therefore refused to him, on his return, the old Cradle of Liberty, which had been so often rocked before by the feet of thousands moved by the might of his eloquence, she dishonored herself and not the Statesman who had incurred her frown. Differ as men may in regard to the right or wrong of the course he pursued in that time of trial, they cannot but see that it required great moral courage in him, thus to brave the opinions and the feelings of his State, and risk his character and standing and influence all upon it. And he well might say in his defence to those whom he represented, "Had I loved you less, I had done and spoken otherwise than I have." But he lived to see that dishonor done away; and the last welcome which he met in Boston, and which brought the tears in torrents down that old man's furrowed cheek, was healing to his wounded spirit; and proved to him that Massachusetts loved him, after all, as she has loved no other man beside. And Faneuil Hall, still echoing with the weeping of the multitudes, and with the voices of those who spoke the nation's sorrow, in its sable drapery stands to-day, mute witness of Massachusetts' and the nation's grief.

If we look for other evidences of the service which these men have rendered in their individual capacities and stations, we find them "inwrought into the annals of the country" for the last thirty years. To one we owe the honorable close of the second war with England. To the other, the arresting of a third war, which was on the point of breaking out. We find such evidences in the noble stands which they have both taken, in times when national peace and honor have been threatened. We find them in the wise administration of all the interests with which they were entrusted. We find them in their ceaseless efforts to promote state amity and brotherhood. We find them in their many labors to develop the national resources, and promote the natural well being in all its departments. We find them in their never-failing sympathy with the suffering and struggling citizens of this and every land. In Ireland, in Hungary, in South America, and in Greece, their names are only less familiar than those of Emmet, Kossuth, Bolivar and Marco Botzaris. This sympathy was none the less sincere, if they were not ready to espouse the schemes of men less wise and far-seeing than themselves. We find them in the records of their speeches delivered on great occasions, and in the traditions of many which have found no record.

As orators they have had few equals in any age, and they leave none behind them who could claim this place. Each was great, though different from the other. The eloquence of one was like his own native home; a varied scene of woodland, hill and dale, of sturdy forests and verdant meadows; of oaks and vines and violets, and flowing brooks, and singing birds and whispering breezes; charming, fascinating, insinuating; and winning its way to heart and judgment by a thousand gentle arts and graceful passages and skilful surprises. The eloquence of the other was also like the home from which he came. The thunder which dwelt among his native hills, had settled upon

his brow, and the lightnings flashed from beneath it, as he had seen them in his boyhood gleam about those cloud-capped hills. It was Titanic, Colossal, Continental. It had at once the music and the might of the many waters, whose voices he heard when he went to rest from toil, amid the well-tilled meadows of Marsh-field. It swept every thing before it. It was like a tempest, with occasional lulls, in which a plaintive sighing is heard among the trees; and anon, the crash of falling forests. And this too not by the tricks of the player, or the force of wild passion, but by the calm, majestic power of great Thought, robed in great Speech, and armed with ponderous and trenchant Truth.

I do not feel called upon to speak of the moral greatness or littleness of these men, because the occasion does not demand it. I have aimed only to hint at some of the reasons why their memories should be cherished on this day of thanksgiving. For their faults—and faults they had—we are not required to be grateful, but they do not lessen the claim upon our gratitude for their virtues, their lives, their services. I have spoken of them neither as private men nor as party men; but as public men, national men; to whose greatness all of every state, and creed, and sect, will bear witness. We are grateful that they have lived, while we grieve that they have died.

Alas! that this should be the closing wail of all the eulogies of human greatness. I have said ye are Gods, but ye shall die like men. Greater than all is Death. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty. He removeth the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged. He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness, where there is no way. He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them; he enlargeth the nations and straiteneth them again. He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty. So man lieth down and riseth not, till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.

Amid the peaceful groves of Ashland, where so many of my boyhood's hours were passed, and through which I used to roam as a child, beside a noble stately form, a great multitude is gathered. Venerable Senators and honored Representatives of the nation, have come from the far-off capitol. Men of every class, condition, and pursuit, have met together here. The plough is left in the field, the anvil echoes not the hammer's stroke, the tables of the money-changers are emptied, the marts of commerce are deserted, and the mourners go about the streets. The dwellings of the citizen, the courts of justice, the schools of learning, the churches of the good, and even the houses of the wicked, are robed in black, and left untenanted. Old age with tottering step, and bright-eyed childhood, and manhood in its prime, and the mother with her babe, and the maiden in her beauty, all mingle in that multitude which no more can number. The velvet turf is turned in a quiet, secluded spot, and the earth thrown up; and around that spot the eager thousands gather, with hushed breath and tearful eyes. And the earth is thrown back, and the green turf turned again; and the toil-worn Statesman sleeps, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. They will raise a lofty monument above that sacred spot. They need not carve an epitaph upon it; they need not even inscribe a name. The record of his worth is written in his country's history, and until the latest generation, sire will tell to son, that beneath that marble sleeps Kentucky's noblest son—the nation's idol—HENRY CLAY. But

Scarce through the vaulted caverns of the West,
Has died a people's tributary sigh;
And now New England's granite-girdled breast,
Thrills with the utterance of her funeral cry.

* * * * *

Death's giant shadow thrown among the stars,
Upon Jove's broad, refulgent orb is bent;
It passed beyond the crimson disc of Mars,
To quench the whitest of the firmament.
A voice is mute, whose calm, deliberate word,
Fell, more resistless than the warrior's sword.

He died, not like his great compatriot, in his country's Capitol, far from home; but in the bosom of his family, and in the spot where he had loved to listen to the lowing of the kine, and to watch the waving grain, and to gaze upon the sea which laved his fertile fields. It was but a few short steps from the chamber where he met his fate, to the silent tomb in which they left him to his long repose. A nation, not so largely represented at his burial, yet followed his noble form, in spirit, to his grave, and mourned for him as one mourneth for an only son. When Clay fell, they had a Webster left, but Webster dead, there was no Clay to die.

And they will build a monument to perpetuate his memory, too. But why build monuments to him? They are already built, from the boundaries amid the vast pine forests of the north, to the golden gates of the far-off Pacific. His country's Constitution, defended so bravely, and so long upheld by him, is his monument! The Union of these States; not yet "in broken and dishonored fragments," not yet "dissevered, discordant, belligerent," is the monument alike of his and his illustrious rival's fame. His works are with us to this day, monuments of his imperial, massive intellect, which will live with the language in which they were penned and spoken. There is Plymouth Rock, once baptised with the tears of bare-foot Pilgrims, and re-baptised with the fire of his eloquence, who was the Pilgrim's noblest son. There is Bunker Hill's tall shaft, scarce less the monument of the brave men who fell on that hill of battle, than of him through whose efforts, principally, it was raised, and who commemorated its completion in a speech which will outlast the granite pile. No! he needs no new memorials to remind the coming generations of him whom Massachusetts loved so well, and a world so much admired.

It is fitting for me now in conclusion to allude in brief to another still more recent fall; not for its own sake merely, but

because, as I believe, so closely connected with the two already chronicled. For eight and twenty years, the men of this country have been known chiefly under two great party names, and for eight and twenty years, two men were the pillars on which one of these great parties rested. What then more natural, more necessary, than that when the pillars had fallen, the building should dissolve? Was it mere coincidence that the greatest defeat known in the history of political warfare in this country, should tread upon the heels of that victory which the last Enemy had won, over the two most prominent men of the defeated party? And was it mere coincidence that only in Kentucky and Massachusetts, where the ashes of Clay and Webster rest, with their bordering States, Vermont and Tennessee, should be found a people who still cling to the principles and policy which these men had upheld? It seems to me there is more than mere coincidence in this, and that the Providence which ordered such a sequence of events, designed to indicate the opening of a new era in the political history of the land.

I have nothing here to say as to my own belief, whether that era will be one of advance or retrogression in the nation's welfare; or whether this defeat should be numbered among the occasions of national thanksgiving, or of national lamentation. To many, it has been a source of deep and heartfelt sorrow; to more a matter of indifference, and to most a matter of rejoicing. Time and Providence will bring forth the foreordained results. But, recording now, willingly or unwillingly, as I believe the final downfall of a great political party, you will all, whether sympathizing with its creed or not, unite with me in a parting tribute to its last Administration.

I am but saying what has been said before, by men of different political faith, that never since the formation of the government, has there been an Administration more entitled to the country's admiration, respect and gratitude. That very much

of this is due to him who held the highest office in the Cabinet, and from whose tomb our steps have just been turned, none can deny. But let us not withhold the meed of praise which belongs to the Heads of the other Departments, and especially to him whom God raised to the highest seat of honor in this nation. It was an apostolic exhortation, that supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men, but especially for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. It is proper occasion of thanksgiving, then, that under the government of our present Chief Magistrate, we have led such a life, to so good an extent. Coming into power under the embarrassments which always attend an accidental elevation to office—as men term it—he has yet been found equal to every emergency in which he has been called to act. Fixed and fearless in his determination that the laws should be obeyed, he has tempered the rigor of their execution, with all the leniency and prudence which sound judgment could have dictated. If some mad-cap citizens have found dishonorable imprisonment or death, on foreign shores, they met a fate of which they were forewarned, and from which the Government could not, and should not, have delivered them. If men in violation of all law, human and divine, will invade their neighbor's territory and rights, or intermeddle with that which concerns them not, they can but expect to be treated accordingly; and while we pity their folly, and mourn over its consequences, we may not interpose to stay the processes of Justice. It is matter of congratulation that all such attempts have been met with the frown and prompt opposition of the Executive.

The same firmness and good judgment have been exhibited in every other department of national interest. The Constitution and the Laws have been upheld; treaties with other governments have been fulfilled; the national honor and integrity have been vindicated; the rights of all the states and of all classes of citi-

zens have been respected; unexpected exigencies promptly and wisely met; new enterprizes originated and old ones conducted with skill and discretion. On land and sea, at home and abroad, the country's name has been raised in the estimation of mankind. Fidelity, dignity, propriety, in fine, have marked the whole course of government; and unexampled prosperity — in good degree, the result of these — have been our portion. "Honor then to whom honor is due," and thanksgiving both to God and the Government for all the good which we have enjoyed. Unknowing of the future, we should be grateful for the past. But let that future bring with it what it may, our trust is in the Lord, who made the Heavens and the Earth; and Who sitteth King above the Nations, working all things according to the counsel of His own will.

To whom the King eternal, immortal and invisible, the only wise God, be ascribed, as is most due, all might, majesty, dominion and glory, world without end. AMEN.

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